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18 March 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: PP/PP/PL

SUBJECT : Comments on "Plan for Psychological Exploitation of Stalin's Death" (TS No. 87143)

1. Comments on the title

Inasmuch as Stalin's death may create new hazards as well as new opportunities, it is recommended that the title be changed to "Plan for Psychological Operations After Stalin's Death."

2. Comments on the "Problem" (PART I)

a. The same weakness is reflected in the statement of the problem as is reflected in the title of the Plan. The assumption is made that "real progress towards our national objectives" can only follow Stalin's death. Although certain tactical changes have taken place as a result of Stalin's death, it must be assumed that the basic objectives and strategic concept of the Communist ideology has not been altered. Therefore the danger to the free world which existed prior to Stalin's death has not been eliminated by a change of power.

b. It is therefore proposed that the following paragraphs be substituted for paragraphs 1 a. and 1 b., PART I:

"a. The problem is to devise a plan of psychological operations as one part of a comprehensive program to deal with both the hopeful and the dangerous contingencies which may follow on Stalin's death.

"b. While the death of Stalin represents an undeniably important 'tactical' change in the world situation, the 'strategic' opposition of Communism versus the free world continues. For prudent planning, it must be assumed that the new Communist regime, within the continuing framework of Communist policy, will exhibit both new strengths and new weaknesses. It is essential that all agencies engaged in psychological operations both exploit to the

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full such new weaknesses in the Communist system as may be assumed or detected, and that they also prepare carefully for new psychological offensives that the new regime may launch. It is equally essential that all agencies engaged in psychological operations closely scrutinize the present and forthcoming phase of 'tactical' conflict with the new Soviet regime for whatever hints it may provide as to the strengths and weaknesses of the U. S. 'strategic' plan of psychological operations against Communism."

3. Comments on the "Basic Considerations" (PART I)

a. It is proposed that paragraph 2 a., PART I, be changed as follows:

"a. Psychological operations by themselves cannot have sufficient impact on the Soviet system to produce those changes which we would regard as real defense of and progress toward our national objectives. They can only contribute to the pursuit of diplomatic, political, military and economic actions taken by the United States Government, or aggravate stresses and counter offensive moves which emerge within the Soviet system itself."

b. Paragraph 2 b., PART I, needs no alteration.

4. Comments on the "Assumptions" (PART I)

a. Of the four assumptions listed, it appears that assumption d. calling for a Presidential speech outlining a U. S. program for peace is of immediate importance inasmuch as it contains certain advantageous as well as dangerous elements whose final effect on the target can only be determined in terms of the speech itself. For instance, the content of such a speech must not:

(1) Assist Malenkov in the consolidation of his power by extending to his regime the highest recognition that the U. S. can bestow. If the President of the United States confirms the Malenkov regime as a fit negotiating partner, he thereby indicates confidence in the viability of the regime -- whereas the prime interest of the United States is to destroy the regime.

(2) Contradict the Presidential statement made at the time of Stalin's illness. The President at that time drew a clear line of distinction between the Russian people and their leaders. The President also implied that the United States considered the Russian people, and not their leaders, as representative of Russia. Now to appeal to the regime with the outright statement or the hint that the U. S. wishes to negotiate would dash any hopes of the peoples of the USSR that the previous Presidential statement may have raised.

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(3) Destroy hope for liberation that may have arisen or have been engendered in the satellite world.

(4) Enhance in Europe the already apparent "third force" concept, or the wishful thinking that Malenkov's peace overtures are sincere and offer a satisfactory solution to the present political dilemma.

(5) Mislead the American people as to the gravity of the struggle still before them.

b. In view of the foregoing, it is suggested that the assumptions listed in the Plan be restated as follows:

(1) Retain subparagraph 3 a., 3 a. (1), and 3 a. (2).

(2) Subparagraph 3 b. should be revised as follows:

"It is assumed that the U. S. Government intends both to exploit to the full the opportunities presented by Stalin's death and prepare vigilantly for new challenges offered by the Malenkov regime."

(3) Retain subparagraph 3 c.

(4) Subparagraph 3 d. In the light of the discussion under 4 a. above, subparagraph 3 d. should be restated as follows:

"d. Finally, it is assumed that the initial major move in this campaign will be a Presidential speech defining the U. S. posture in the period immediately following on Stalin's death. For psychological purposes, it is assumed that this Presidential speech will re-affirm the solicitude of the American people for the peoples of the USSR; that it will show special concern for the Soviet peoples during a time when new masters may try to establish themselves through new brutalities; that it will proclaim great U. S. vigilance at a time when an untested regime rules the USSR; that it will starkly contrast Malenkov's professions of 'peaceful intentions' with two planes shot down in Germany, continuing casualties in Korea, continuing aggression in Indo-China, thousands of refugees streaming into Western Berlin, veto number 56 at the UN, etc; and that it will warn the Malenkov regime against using external aggression as camouflage for internal difficulties."

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c. Inasmuch as the assumptions listed in the Plan pertain only to the conditions inherent to the United States, it is suggested that the following additional assumptions be listed.

(1) It is assumed that the new Soviet leadership is acting within the framework of a comprehensive plan designed to assure the orderly transfer of power after Stalin's death.

(2) It is assumed that within the framework of such a plan, the new Soviet regime will initiate a series of provocative military, diplomatic, psychological and economic warfare measures, short of starting a general war, designed to throw off balance western efforts to interfere with or impede the consolidation of the regime's power.

A { (3) It is assumed that the new Soviet regime will undertake specific measures designed to test the reaction of the West to the new regime. These measures will be aimed at exacerbating the disunity of the West and preventing the formation of a united western effort against the new Soviet leadership.

(4) Finally, it is assumed that the new Soviet regime will make tactical peace overtures to the West for the purpose of exploiting the neutralist sentiment in many countries and gaining the time required for consolidation of its rule.

5. Comments on the "Psychological Estimate of the Situation" (PART I)

a. It is suggested that the paragraphs under the "Psychological Estimate of the Situation" as listed in the Plan be changed and restated as follows:

(1) In the absence of definitive information as to the internal situation in the Soviet Union and within the Soviet system, two working hypotheses — one optimistic and a base for offensive action, the other pessimistic and a base for defensive preparations — must be employed.

(2) The optimistic hypothesis reveals the following opportunities for the psychological exploitation of Stalin's death:

(a) The death of Stalin leaves an ideological and mystical vacuum in the Soviet Union and World Communism. With the barrier of Stalin's reputation gone, anti-Communist ideas and emotions may be rushed into the vacuum.

*This should
be checked
with intelligence*

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(b) The abiding disaffection of the Soviet and satellite peoples has been fanned, by the death of Stalin, into a greater hope of liberation. This hope can be nurtured to increase passive resistance for class, personal, and patriotic reasons.

(c) The hopes for greater independence of the non-Russian nationality groups in the Soviet Union have risen. These hopes can be exploited to foster resistance in the name of ethnic aspirations.

(d) The wooing of the Soviet Army by the new regime may arouse independent political ambitions among the military. Such ambitions can be catered to in order to foster a split between political and military leaders.

(e) The new regime's frankly expressed fear of "disarray and panic" indicates serious concern for its viability. This concern can be exploited to deprecate the new leaders and to instill confidence in their subject peoples.

(f) The change of regime will spread uncertainty and fear among the Soviet ruling class and, to a lesser extent, among the ruling classes in the satellite states. These factors may be utilized to increase defection and to hamper the operations of the Communist machinery.

(g) The reorganization of the Soviet government will cost time and confusion. This will permit inculcating into the bureaucrats a sense of their frustration and into the people a contempt for the stalled administrative organs.

(h) The new regime needs time for internal consolidation before it can move with certainty in the foreign field. This affords an opportunity to confront the new regime with problems it cannot solve, and to strengthen the free world in an atmosphere somewhat freer of Soviet interference.

(i) The new regime, in its uncertain state, fears the free world more. Hence free world can assume a more confident posture.

(j) The leaders of satellite states, especially Mao Tse-Tung, may seek greater freedom from Moscow. Thus a wedge may be driven between them and the new regime.

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(3) The pessimistic hypothesis reveals the need for defense against the following enemy offensive capabilities in the period following Stalin's death:

(a) The new regime knows full well that the best defense is a good offense. It will therefore speedily confront us with acts of external aggression (for example, the shooting down of planes) in order to paralyze our psychological program (as, for example, the British already seem to be paralyzed). To counter, we may have to warn the new regime against aggression, and to intensify our psychological efforts beyond present capabilities.

(b) The new regime will effectively exploit Western wishful thinking (i.e. that it is so weak that it must have "peace") in order to wage a highly successful "peace campaign" among our allies and among the neutral nations. To counter, we may have to inculcate forcefully the continuing aggressiveness and continued disparity between Soviet words and deeds.

(c) The collegial, more anonymous character of the new regime provides a more effective ideological and mystical cement for Communism than the personal leadership of Stalin did. To counter, we may in time have to evoke a certain nostalgia for Stalin.

(d) The new Soviet machinery, in its streamlined form, wields power more effectively than Stalin's personal despotism did. We may have to be prepared for greater flexibility and skill on the part of the enemy.

(e) The new Soviet machinery already enjoys the support of the military. To counter, we may have to address the Soviet military in warning, rather than in wooing, terms.

(f) The new regime may offer the Soviet and satellite peoples certain temporary economic benefits. We may need to warn the people as to the illusory nature of those benefits.

(g) The new regime, through a series of fresh purges, may paralyze internal opposition even more. We may, in order to hold the confidence of the enslaved peoples, have to recommend seeming compliance with government orders.

(h) The new regime may quickly win the confidence of the ruling classes, by better performance and special privileges. To counter, our propaganda to these classes may have to be menacing, rather than divisive.

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(i) Satellite leaders may be more satisfied with the new regime than they were with Stalin. Again, we may have to warn them of our ire at their collaboration with Moscow, rather than to encourage their individual aspirations.

6. Comments on the "Strategic Concept" (PART I)

a. Retain subparagraph 5 a.

b. Our basic aims in the present situation are to use the opportunities and to counter the dangers inherent in the transfer of the Soviet regime to new hands:

(1) Version B under 5 b. is accepted as far as it goes. The following should be added:

"(9) To maximize the disaffection of the minority nationalities in the Soviet Union.

"(10) To reject any Soviet overtures to negotiation, because such negotiation can only lend respectability to a regime we wish to keep weak.

"(11) To resist and unmask vigorously any new ^{false} peace campaign. ✓

"(12) To combat wishful thinking in the free world as to the weakness of Communism. ✓

"(13) To react resolutely to any new aggression. ✓

"(14) To envisage expanding psychological capabilities in order to counter possibly more effective Soviet internal and external propaganda." ✓

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7. Comments on Paragraph 5 c. (Assets) (PART I)

This section appears to be in need of complete revision. The Eisenhower administration has not yet gained full command of the domestic U. S. situation, as witness its frustration on the Yalta-Teheran resolution; it is viewed with considerable suspicion by the soft-minded among our allies; and while the President may have a residue of personal prestige within the Communist orbit thanks to his World War II achievements, that prestige has been considerably diminished by concerted Communist attacks on it. The undeniably great potential asset that the

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President represents can become reality only through his deeds and words.

b. The same thing applies to the second alleged asset. The commanding position of the U. S. depends entirely on how that position is used in the present situation.

c. The third asset simply does not exist. Secretary of State Dulles in his May 19, 1952 LIFE article specifically stressed that Soviet military superiority hampered free world political and psychological efforts and initiatives.

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